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Jennifer and Rachel: A Summary

Silver uses the hypothetical situation of Jennifer to introduce reproductive cloning. Jennifer is 35 years old, she has a stable, well-paying career and no current romantic relationship. One day she wakes and, realizing that she’s not getting any younger, decides she’d like to be a mother. Not wanting to worry about the possible variables that come with donated sperm, Jennifer decides that since she’s healthy there’s no need for chance. Jennifer has the means to support a child, and her desire for one is great enough that she is willing to subvert the government to acquire a clone. The hypothetical is used as the example in most [note exactly which] of Silver’s arguments.

With the hypothetical firmly in place, Silver opens the door and begins systematically debunking all of the most prominent arguments against cloning. First the question of harm. Jennifer is unharmed, but what of Rachel? Some could say that knowing her [biological/medical] future is harmful. Silver points out that most people have some idea of what they’ll face later on in life (using his balding grandfather as an example). It is unlikely that such knowledge would be any more traumatic for Rachel than any other child.

Perhaps Rachel could be harmed by the expectations placed upon her by Jennifer. But there is no guarantee that Jennifer’s expectations will be anymore unrealistic than that of an average parent. After all, just because they share identical genes doesn’t mean they are[/will be] the same people.

Yet another voice argues that Rachel’s rights are being violated. But since when is having a unique genetic code a right? Twins occur naturally all the time, after all. For the sake of continuing the argument, there will be some Rachel’s who feel bad upon learning that they are clones. That’s hardly enough reason to ban the process all together. Surely children who are born into poverty would feel just as bad, if not worse.

Silver acknowledges the various religious stances against cloning, but admits that theological arguments can’t be rebuffed by the scientific. The opposite side of the coin, the evolutionists, are concerned for the integrity of the gene pool. Reproductive cloning would only be available to the very ‘well off’, and even then, most people want a child of their *own*. Clones would end up being a very small percentage of the population.

Before cloning came around people could avoid becoming parents by not having sex. But when a child can be created from a single cell, then it’s suddenly easy to become a donor. A second hypothetical highlights the potential abuse of [surreptitious cloning] reproductive cloning. Michel Jordan goes to the doctor’s office and has blood drawn. One of the lab technicians steals a portion of that blood and takes it too an IVF clinic where then it can be used to create Jordan clones. These ‘famous’ clones would be expensive, but maybe a few would buy in the hopes of having a famous child. Silver, using this ‘Michel Jordan hypothetical’, argues that even if cells were taken from an unaware [famous] donor, there is no practical way to *use* that child. The parents would put copious amounts of time, energy, and money to raise a child that won’t be the same as the original.

Regardless of the dubious uses of reproductive cloning, Silver acknowledges that there will always be those who will attempt to abuse it. Even so, human cloning is inevitable because as it will be possible [with technology advancing as it is] there will be those who desire to do so. As long as there are those who desire reproductive cloning, there will be those willing to sell it to them. As long as the market exists, laws of government will [at best] only delay those who want a clone. Within two weeks of Dolly’s [first cloned sheep] grand introduction to the world a company named ‘Clonaid’ set up shop in the Bahamas. Run by the French scientist Dr. Brigitte Boisselier, the company announced its intention to open a clinic that offered cloning [for a fee], directing the advertisement towards infertile and homosexual couples.

Works Cited

Silver, Lee. *Remaking* *Eden: Cloning and Beyond in a Brave New World*. New York City: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1988. Book Excerpt.